

Today's News - Thursday, February 6, 2014

- Now you can make up your own mind about the MoMA/AFAM debate - the video of last week's forum in its entirety is on online (and definitely worth watching!).
- Pedersen was skeptical of Hawthorne's suggestion that DS+R should have resigned the MoMA commission, but now: "I'm beginning to think he was right. There will always be another job. But you have only one reputation."
- Pogrebin gets a lot of landscape architects to weigh in on the possibility that MoMA might open the Sculpture Garden to the public - for free; the majority thinks it's a lousy idea: "How is this different than just a shopping mall with sculptures?"
- Giovannini, meanwhile, cheers The Living as the MoMA P.S.1 pick for this year's Young Architects Program with its "Hy-Fi" tower of "very eco-smart bricks" that "will no doubt rise like a nerdy enigma wrapped in a conundrum wrapped in a computer program" (in a good way).
- Calys cheers the Presidio Trust's decision to nix the Lucas proposal for Crissy Field that "didn't deserve to see the light of day," but bemoans that "the passionate and sincere efforts" by the two other teams "went for naught."
- Hargreaves and Jones offer their own take on the Presidio's problem: "The essential question should not be which of the three building proposals should be added," but "should we add a building at all?"
- Jacobs finds joy in SWA's "skill and imagination" in transforming Houston's "trash-lined eyesore" underneath ribbons of elevated expressways into the Buffalo Bayou Promenade; NYC's Under the Elevated shares a kindred spirit.
- Hume is more than heartened by a report that proves "it would be better and cheaper to get rid of the Gardiner Expressway than to keep it - a large swath of Toronto could be brought in from the dark and civilized."
- Two takes on taking down the skyways around Minneapolis's Nicollet Mall: Tear them down: "James Corner Field Operations has an impossible task - to save us from ourselves."
- Without the skyways, it "would be cruel and unusual punishment" for those who work downtown "during those deep-freeze months."
- The London mayor's "intervention in favor of skate park torpedoes" the Festival Wing redevelopment - and "took the Southbank Centre by surprise," leaving it scrambling to find "alternative funding."
- Capps has an enlightening (and often amusing) breakfast with Gehl, who "delivered one of the best architecture burns I've ever heard" ("bird-sh*t architecture" included).
- Hill gets Gehl's take on London's streets: he's "disappointed with the capital's progress with implementation his ideas for humanizing city streets...Can a fast-growing London be persuaded to love its people more?"
- San Francisco hopes to "reinvent the housing project": Hope SF is rebuilding old housing projects and offering social services to the mostly low-income residents.
- A great profile of Elemental's Aravena: "rather than talking about his prestigious commissions, he wants to talk about social housing" and the "discipline of scarcity" that "leads to a clarity of vision and quality of design."
- After "two decades of bringing fun and creativity to building design," FAT's final act will be "a retrospective of the influence of modernism on housing for the elite Venice Biennale" (Griffiths minces no words re: affordable housing and quality - 'er, the lack thereof).
- The UN taps Bloomberg as an envoy for cities and climate change "to raise political will and mobilize action among cities."
- Call for entries: 2014 Design & Health International Academy Awards.

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Video: A Conversation on the Museum of Modern Art's Plan for Expansion: ...including the planned demolition of the American Folk Art Museum building. Recorded: January 28, 2014 -- Municipal Art Society; AIA New York; Glenn Lowry; Ann Temkin; Elizabeth Diller/Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Reed Kroloff; Cathleen McGuigan/Architectural Record; Jorge Otero-Pailos; Nicolai Ouroussoff; Stephen Rustow/Museoplan; Karen Stein- Architectural League of New York

Damage Control: ...in the wake of MoMA's decision to raze the Folk Art Museum...Christopher Hawthorne...asked why Diller Scofidio + Renfro didn't simply resign the commission, rather than recommend the demolition...At the time, I was skeptical of the suggestion...I'm beginning to think he was right. And right not just from a moral, ethical and historic perspective...There will always be another job. But you have only one reputation. Martin C. Pedersen - Metropolis Magazine

MoMA's Proposal for Sculpture Garden Pleases and Riles: ...the museum is talking about opening the gates to the sanctum for no charge, a prospect that some find positively horrifying...announced the plan...partly to help mitigate its widely unpopular decision to demolish a neighbor, the former American Folk Art Museum..."How is this different than just a shopping mall with sculptures?" By Robin Pogrebin -- Diller Scofidio + Renfro; Michael Van Valkenburgh; George Hargreaves; Ken Smith; Zion Breen Richardson Associates; Adrian Benepe; James Corner Field Operations; Laurie Olin - New York Times

MoMA P.S.1 Picks David Benjamin for the 2014 Young Architects Program: The Living is building a gravity-defying tower made from corn and fungi..."Hy-Fi"...has reinvented the brick...two sorts of very eco-smart bricks...the tower will no doubt rise like a nerdy enigma wrapped in a conundrum wrapped in a computer program. But it may be one of the first built indicators of a shift in architectural paradigms toward a basic biological model. By Joseph Giovannini [images]- Architect Magazine

Mid-Crissy Field development: the winner is...no one: Just to be fair all around, the Presidio Trust said they'd help all three proposal teams find other suitable sites...although where...is up to speculation...The Lucas project didn't deserve to see the light of day...the passionate and sincere efforts from the Presidio Exchange and Bridge/Sustainability Institute teams went for naught. By George Calys -- Urban Design Group; EHDD; WRNS - San Francisco Examiner

Fog, sky, water, land define Crissy Field: The Presidio Trust is asking the wrong question. The essential question should not be which of the three building proposals should be added. The question should be: Should we add a building at all? By George Hargreaves and Mary Margaret Jones - San Francisco Chronicle

Unnatural Nature: Embracing the city by transforming industrial blight into urban amenity: ...the elevated expressway—can, with skill and imagination, be incorporated into metropolitan nature...Buffalo Bayou Promenade...so deftly reclaims a landscape dominated by highways...Houston and New York City are polar opposites...but the Buffalo Bayou and the Under the Elevated projects are kindred expressions of a common realization..."We see everything as having some value." By Karrie Jacobs -- SWA Group; Design Trust for Public Space; Urban Matter, Inc. [images]- Metropolis Magazine

Gardiner takedown has the obvious advantage: The evidence is in: It would be better and cheaper to get rid of the Gardiner Expressway than to keep it...a large swath of Toronto could be brought in from the dark and civilized. By Christopher Hume - Toronto Star

Fixing Nicollet Mall: Tear down the skyways: James Corner Field Operations has an impossible task – to save us from ourselves. They cannot do it alone. This sounds like the last time we were mulling a reconstruction...28 years ago, when...Fred Kent of Project for Public Spaces...also recommended getting rid of skyways. By Sam Newberg [images]- MinnPost (Minneapolis)

Don't tear down the skyways! Minneapolis without skyways...would be cruel and unusual punishment for folks who must

spend their days downtown...we need to acknowledge that [it] is not a year-around outdoor place...The skyways make [the city] more livable during those deep-freeze months...Without them, downtown would be a dismal place and winter would be a lot more painful than it is today. By Iric Nathanson - MinnPost (Minneapolis)

Southbank Centre puts £120m Festival Wing redevelopment on hold: London mayor's intervention in favour of skate park torpedoed proposal, forcing centre to look for alternative funding...Boris Johnson's intervention...took the Southbank Centre by surprise. - Guardian (UK)

Jan Gehl Knows the Formula for Public Life: The architect of Copenhagen's influential Strøget pedestrian zone reflects on the global rise of urbanist planning...delivered one of the best architecture burns I've ever heard. He casually described the Dubai skyline as "bird-shit architecture": "architects dropping their funny towers wherever they fly." By Kriston Capps -- "How To Study Public Life"/Gehl Architects [images, links]- Architect Magazine

Interview: Jan Gehl on London, streets, cycling and creating cities for people: ...disappointed with the capital's progress with implementation his ideas for humanising city streets but sees grounds for optimism elsewhere..."Ralph Erskine said that architecture is not about sculpture, it is about people. A good architect must love people or it doesn't make sense." Can a fast-growing London be persuaded to love its people more? By Dave Hill - Guardian (UK)

How San Francisco Is Trying to Reinvent the Housing Project: Hope SF aims to provide social services for residents in a city where property values are skyrocketing...by rebuilding old housing projects and offering a range of social services to the mostly low-income residents...inspired by the NewHolly project in Seattle... - The Atlantic Cities

Alejandro Aravena: architect, equaliser, el visionario: The award-winning Chilean designer has made it his quest to create buildings that remove cities' natural divisions: ...rather than talking about his prestigious commissions, he wants to talk about social housing...architects "need to adjust to what society is discussing. We just provide the forms that can translate their problems into solutions"...the "discipline of scarcity" leads to a clarity of vision and quality of design... By Bruce Watson -- Elemental - Guardian (UK)

"The race to build new homes drives down quality": As the party draws to a close for FAT...planning a retrospective of the influence of modernism on housing for the elite Venice Biennale. But after two decades of bringing fun and creativity to building design, the party is over. Venice will be its last project. -- Sean Griffiths/Fashion Architecture Taste- Guardian (UK)

Ex-NYC mayor Michael Bloomberg chosen to be UN envoy for cities and climate change: ...will assist the U.N. chief in his consultations with mayors and other key parties "to raise political will and mobilize action among cities as part of his longer-term strategy to advance efforts on climate change." - U.S. News & World Report

Call for entries: 2014 Design & Health International Academy Awards; deadline: April 1 - International Academy of Design and Health



-- "The Architect's Brain: Neuroscience, Creativity, and Architecture" by Harry Francis Mallgrave...a thought-provoking historical commentary... By Ralph Spencer Steenblik
-- Bjarke Ingels Group/BIG: Danish National Maritime Museum, Helsingør, Denmark...proposal was daring indeed, but also highly sensible.
-- "Hadid - Complete Works 1979-2013" by Philip Jodidio: ...the entire body of work...is very comprehensively presented.

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